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AUTHOR Zeitlin, Shirley
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ABSTRACT

The Coping Inventory, a criterion referenced scaled observation instrument used to assess adaptive coping behavior in handicapped children, is described. The adaptive behavior summaries of two children, a 5 year old in a special education class and a 15 year old handicapped high school student, are used to show how the Coping Inventory results are translated for classroom use. The research on which the instrument is based is reported. Five tables provide such information as a comparison of coping inventory scores of handicapped and nonhandicapped children, interobserver reliability coefficients for scoring the Coping Inventory, and coping behaviors that most differentiate preschool handicapped children from nonhandicapped children. (Author/DB)

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Teaching Adaptive Coping Behavior - Theory Translated into Action

Shirley Zeitlin, Ed.D.

The Coping Inventory, a criterion referenced, scaled observation instrument used to assess adaptive coping behavior is described. The adaptive behavior summaries of two children, Billy, a five year five month old child in a special education class, and Joe, a fifteen year old handicapped high school student, is used to show how the Coping Inventory results are translated for classroom use.

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Teaching Adaptive Coping Behavior -

Theory Translated into Action

Shirley Zeitlin, Ed.D.
Dept. of Communication Sciences
and Disorders
Montclair State College
Upper Montclair, N.J. 07043
201-893-4226

presented at

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The classroom is a place where children can learn to cope more adaptively. In most classroomm, unfortunately, the teaching of adaptive coping behavior is sadly neglected eventhough a child's maladaptive coping behaviors may interfere with the learning of educational skills. A part of the problem has been the difficulty in identifying the coping behaviors that facilitate or interfere with the child's learning, and the strategies that the teacher can use to help the child develop more adaptive habits of coping.

This presentation will describe the Coping Inventory (Zeitlin, 1978), a criterion referenced, numerically evaluated observation instrument used to assess adaptive coping behavior. The Adaptive Behavior Summaries of two children, Billy, a five year five month old child in a special education class and Joe, a fifteen year old handicapped high school student, will be used to show how the Coping Inventory results are translated for classroom use.

First, I will describe the Coping Inventory, the research it was developed from, give a few key definitions, tell how the Coping Inventory is constructed and used and give some reliability and research results. Then, using the two students' coping profiles translate their Coping Inventory results into goals and objectives for an I.E.P. and suggest a few strategies that a teacher or clinician could use to help these cilldren develop more adaptive coping habits.

Lois Murphy (1976) and her colleagues at Menninger Clinic did a longitudinal study of the coping behavior of 32 children in Topeka, Kansas. In addition to psychological testing, the children's coping behaviors were observed in a variety of structured and unstructured situations starting from birth through age eighteen.

This voluminous data was analyzed and the behaviors most related to adaptive coping identified. The forty-eight items in the Coping Inventory were developed from the results of this data.

Coping as measured in the Coping Inventory is defined as an active adaptive process of using strategies to manage one's world.

Factor analysis of the Murphy data identified two categories of coping behavior, coping with self, and coping with the environment. Coping with self is "the capacity to manage one's relations to the environment so as to maintain integrated functioning (this contrasted with vulnerability)." Coping with the environment is "the capacity to cope with opportunities, challenges, frustrations and threats in the environment." (Murphy, 1976, p. 117) In addition to the two categories, self and environment, the Coping Inventory uses three bi-polar dimensions to describe coping style; productive - nonproductive, active - passive, and flexible-rigid. (Coelho 1974, Haan 1977, Lazarus 1976, Murphy 1962, 1976, White 1974).

When the Coping Inventory is used by people who have a continuing relationship with the child, such as a teacher or parent, observation is informal over time. For those less familiar with the child or for research and other more rigorous data collection, a minimum of three observations of at least ten minutes each at different times of the day and on different days are used. With experience, rating and scoring the Coping Inventory takes, on the average, about one half hour.

The items in the Coping Inventory are rated on a scale of one to five. A score of:

1 is given when there is no or very minimal evidence of competency.

2 is given when the behavior is inconsistent, ineffective or rigidly repetitious.

3 is given when the behavior is effective in certain situations but doesn't generalize to others.

4 is given when the behavior or skill is used effectively or appropriately more often than not.

5 is given when the behavior is effectively demonstrated.

The X score is used when the item is not applicable to the child or the behavior has not been observed during the observation period.

The items are scored and a profile and Adaptive Behavior Index are developed. The Adaptive Behavior Index summarizes the child's coping competence on the same continuum ranging from maladaptive (1) to adaptive (5).

Interpretation of the results is based on the same meanings as the one's used for rating the items in the Coping Inventory.

Some examples of the interpretation of results are:

An Adaptive Behavior Index of 1.7 indicates minimal competence or maladaptive coping behavior with some behaviors used randomly and mostly ineffectively.

An index of 3.2 indicates developing competence with effective coping in some situations but not others.

An index of 4.1 indicates functional competence; more often than not, coping is effective.

The interpretations of the scores in each category (Self, Environment) and dimension (Productive, Active, Flexible) are also based on the meaning of the ratings (1 to 5).

The Coping Inventory is based on non-normative data. Variability in coping competence is not related to typical developmental patterns. For example, the expectation is that a ten year old child will not necessarily have a higher score than a five year old. There are both adaptive and maladaptive copers in each group. The differences in the coping behavior among age groups and other types of groups may be in the context of the behavior rather than in the formal characteristics.

The Coping Inventory can be used to identify differences (if any) in patterns and types of coping behaviors between specific groups, such as between handicapped and non-handicapped children, children with one type of handicap as compared to another, ethnic groups, etc.

For example, when the coping behaviors of 59 non-handicapped children and 44 handicapped children aged three to five were compared, there were significant differences ($p. < 001$) in every category and dimension of coping behavior. The mean Adaptive Behavior Index of the non-handicapped children was 4.05, which reinforces the criteria of four as functional coping competence (see Table I).

Reliability of the Coping Inventory was assessed in two ways. Table II shows the inter-observer reliability coefficients for four independent observers rating 56 children, ages three to five, 37 in typical nursery programs and 19 in preschool programs for handicapped children.

Table 1

Comparison of Coping Inventory Scores of Handicapped and Non-Handicapped Children

		Adaptive Coping Index	Self	Environ-ment	Produc-tive	Active	Flex-ible	Self Produc-tive	Environ-ment Produc-tive	Self Active	Environ-ment Active	Self Flex-ible	Environ-ment Flex-ible
Handicapped (N=44)	$\bar{x}$	3.01	2.94	3.09	3.07	3.01	2.91	2.98	3.16	3.02	3.00	2.78	3.04
	s	0.79	0.83	0.78	0.84	0.79	0.77	0.86	0.86	0.85	0.83	0.89	0.69
Non-Handicapped (N=59)	$\bar{x}$	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.10	4.04	3.93	4.11	4.10	4.05	4.03	3.92	3.95
	s	0.53	0.55	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.58	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.58	0.63	0.59
	t	7.55*	7.70*	7.02*	7.12*	7.45*	7.36*	7.57*	6.30*	6.95*	7.04*	7.25*	7.04
	p	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001

*Cochran-Cox Correction Applied

Table II

Inter-Observer Reliability Coefficients for Scoring Coping Inventory

	(N=56) Total Group	(N=19) Handicapped	(N=37) Non-Handicapped
Self-Productive	.916	.972	.802
Env.-Productive	.945	.976	.872
Self-Active	.932	.967	.805
Env.-Active	.922	.945	.843
Self-Flexible	.939	.980	.837
Env.-Flexible	.838	.957	.781
Productive	.948	.982	.875
Active	.954	.974	.884
Flexible	.918	.982	.849
Self	.948	.985	.858
Environment	.946	.981	.891
Adaptive Behavior Index	.957	.988	.895

Table III shows the split half reliability coefficients (odd-even items) on a sample of 103 children, aged three to five, (59 typical children in regular preschool programs and 44 handicapped children in special programs).

The standard error of measurement for the typical group was .099 and for the handicapped group .083.

When the Coping Inventory was administered to 57 children aged five to fourteen in a special school for children classified as emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired, the mean Adaptive Behavior Index was 2.84 (coping with Self - 2.74, coping with Environment - 2.94). Of these children, seven, aged 13 to 14, were in a transitional class at the local public school as the first step back into the mainstream. The mean Adaptive Behavior Index of this transition group was 3.44. This data provides an example of how the Coping Inventory may be used to help make a placement decision for a classified child. The higher the Adaptive Behavior Index, the higher the probability that the child can succeed in a less restrictive environment.

Group scores give some insight into the special needs of handicapped children. The ten behaviors that differentiated most between the three to five year old handicapped and non-handicapped children previously described are listed in Table IV.

The five most adaptive and the five least adaptive behaviors of the described group of 57 emotionally disturbed and neurologically impaired children are listed in Table V. Many of the behaviors rated as most adaptive were not evidenced when the children were in their sending schools.

Table III

Split-Half Reliability Coefficients for the Coping Inventory for Handicapped and Non-Handicapped Groups (Odd-Even Items)

	Odd Items		Even Items			
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	r_{sh}	p.
Total Group (N=103)	3.61	0.81	3.61	0.85	.987	.001
Handicapped Group (N=44)	3.05	0.79	2.98	0.80	.989	.001
Non-Handicapped Group (N=59)	4.02	0.52	4.07	0.53	.965	.001

Table IV

Coping Behaviors that Most Differentiate

Handicapped Children (age 3-5) from Non-Handicapped Children (age 3-5)

Score Difference	Category	Dimension	Item
1.77	Self	Productive	1. Child appropriately uses language to express his needs.
1.64	Environment	Productive	2. Child functions with minimal amount of external structure.
1.34	Self	Flexible	3. Child sees relationships in new ways, etc.
1.31	Environment	Flexible	4. Child, when necessary, uses a range of strategies to achieve a goal or solve a problem.
1.28	Environment	Active	5. Child is stimulating to others.
1.24	Self	Flexible	6. Child can shift plans or change behavior to achieve a goal.
1.21	Self	Productive	7. Child uses cognitive resources effectively.
1.19	Environment	Active	8. Child uses gross and fine motor skills competently.
1.19	Environment	Productive	9. Child resists discouragement.
1.17	Self	Productive	10. Child has confidence in his ability to do.

Table V

Most and Least Adaptive Behaviors of 57 Children (aged 5-14)

Classified as Emotionally Disturbed and Neurologically Impaired

Category	Dimension	Average Rating	
			Most Adaptive Behaviors
Environment	Flexible	3.77	Child accepts warmth and support.
Environment	Productive	3.65	Child has capacity for fun, zest and pleasure.
Environment	Productive	3.61	Child responds to visual and auditory details in the environment.
Environment	Productive	3.60	Child is curous.
Environment	Productive	3.56	Child plays with other children.
			Least Adaptive Behaviors
Self	Flexible	2.00	Child can't mobilize responses in high stress situations in an adaptive way.
Self	Productive	2.14	Child frustrates easily.
Self	Productive	2.21	Child is unable to handle anxiety.
Environment	Flexible	2.26	Child unable to use a range of strategies to achieve a goal or solve a problem.
Environment	Productive	2.31	Child unable to understand and respond to directions without external help or support.

To translate the Coping Inventory information for practical daily use, let's look at the Adaptive Behavior Summaries of Billy and Joe. Billy is a five year five months boy in a self contained special education class in a public school. Joe is fifteen years old and attends a public high school. He is mainstreamed for two subjects and his other subjects are taught in a self contained special class. In addition, he attends a prevocational program where the observations for the Coping Inventory were made. His special classroom teacher confirmed that his observed behavior was similar to that in her classroom.

Billy's Adaptive Behavior Index of 2.7 describes a child whose coping behavior has no consistent pattern and is more maladaptive than adaptive. The categories of Self and Environment overlap. His least adaptive behaviors are in the dimensions of Self Flexible (2.3), Environment Productive (2.5), and Environment Active (2.5). Billy's problem is described as a lack of consistent adaptive coping behavior, rigid coping with his own needs, and passive, non-productive adaptation to the environment (see figure 1).

The list of the childs most and least adaptive behaviors is the basis for setting goals to increase conpetence and to plan strategies to facilitate development of more adaptive coping habits. There are 14 items on which Billy was rated 2. These are too many to try to change at one time. There is only one item (in Self-Active) that was rated 1, and one dimension (Self-Flexible) that was rated lower than all the others. Increasing competence in the last two mentioned are set as priorities for Billy's learning plan. The expectation is that increase in competence in these areas will influence other behaviors. The two goals are to increase Billy's ability:

1. to cope with his own needs more flexibly
2. to stay with a task until completed.

The first goal has four objectives which are Billy's least competent behaviors in the Self Flexible dimension. The objectives are to increase Billy's ability:

1. to see relationships in new ways,
2. to shift plans or change behavior,
3. to accept substitutes when necessary,
4. to behave more independently.

Strategies for the teacher to use to increase competence can be developed by capitalizing on Billy's most adaptive behaviors. For example, to help Billy become more flexible he needs to learn that he has options and can make choices. Since a strength of his is that he can ask for help when needed, the adult when asked can show him how to do something and then encourage him to fugure out an alternate solution. The Coping Inventory is used again to evaluate change in the child's behaviors.

Joe, also, has an Adaptive Behavior Index of 2.7 but has a different pattern of results. He meets his own needs better than he adapts to the demands of the environment. This is especially evident in his low Environment-Flexible score of 1.8. Joe's problem is described as a lack of consistent adaptive behavior and especially rigid coping with the environment, (see figure 2).

Joe has 17 items rated 2 and four rated 1. The four items rated 1 are listed as his least adaptive behaviors. As he has one dimension that is a major problem for him, items rated 2 in this dimension (Environment-Flexible) are also listed under least adaptive behavior.

For Joe, two priority goals are set to help him increase coping competence. These are in the dimension in which he received the lowest rating (Environment-Flexible), and in one of the two items rated 1, that is not in the Environment-Flexible dimension; 'to understand and respond to directions without external help or support (Environment-Productive)'. To change Joe's negative orientation to life was not chosen as a high priority. There is an expectation that with increased competence in the priority areas, Joe will receive more satisfactory feedback and as a result develop a more positive orientation to life.

The goals for Joe are for him to increase his ability:

1. to respond to directions without external help or support
2. to be more flexible in adapting to the demands of the environment.

Objectives for goal one are the initial steps toward achieving this goal. For example, if Joe can respond reasonable well to two part instructions but not three, an objective might be for Joe to respond to three part instructions 90% of the time. An alternative is to have no objectives and Joe's progress can be measured by an increased rating on the Coping Inventory.

For goal two, the objectives are to increase competency in the five items in the dimension Enviornment-Flexible on which Joe was rated 1 or 2. Joe will increase his ability:

1. to give warmth and support to others,
2. to accept warmth and support from others,
3. to enjoy newness and discovery,
4. to be more resilient following disappointment,
5. to accept new ideas or reformulate ideas already held.

Figure I

ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR SUMMARY

CHILD'S NAME: Billy C.A. 5 years, 5 months

Coping With Self	Converted Score	Coping With Environment	Converted Score
PRODUCTIVE	3.2	PRODUCTIVE	2.5
ACTIVE	2.8	ACTIVE	2.5
FLEXIBLE	2.3	FLEXIBLE	3.0

ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR INDEX 2.7

Env.-----
Self.____

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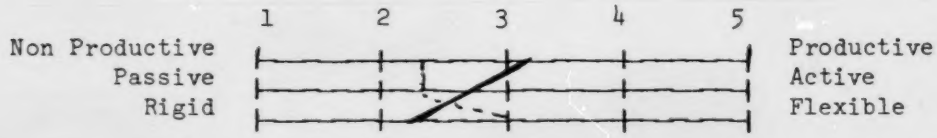

Most Adaptive Behavior				Least Adaptive Behavior			
Cat.	Dim.	Rat.		Cat.	Dim.	Rat.	
S	P	4	More often than not has a happy feeling.	S	A	1	Doesn't stay with task until completed.
S	P	4	More often than not able to handle anxiety.	S	F	2	Doesn't see relationships in new ways.
S	A	4	More often than not asks for help when needed.	S	F	2	Can't shift plans or change behavior.
				S	F	2	Doesn't accept substitutes when necessary.
				S	F	2	Doesn't demonstrate independence and self reliance.
				E	P	2	Doesn't play with other children.
				E	P	2	Doesn't understand directions.
				E	P	2	Doesn't resist discouragement.
				E	P	2	Not aware of feelings of others.
				E	P	2	Doesn't function with minimal amount of external structure.
				E	P	2	Not aware of and doesn't react to cues and moods of others.

Category

S - Self
E - Environment

Dimension

P - Productive
A - Active
F - Flexible

Rating

Figure II

ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR SUMMARY

CHILD'S NAME: Joe C.A. 15 years

Coping With Self	Converted Score	Coping With Environment	Converted Score
PRODUCTIVE	2.6	PRODUCTIVE	2.4
ACTIVE	3.0	ACTIVE	3.0
FLEXIBLE	3.0	FLEXIBLE	1.8

ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR INDEX 2.7

Env.----
Self____

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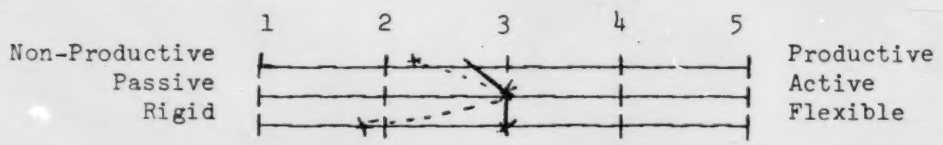

Most Adaptive Behaviors				Least Adaptive Behaviors			
Cat.	Dim.	Rat.		Cat	Dim.	Rat.	
S	F	5	Demonstrates independence and self reliance.	E	P	1	Does not understand directions or respond to directions without external help or support.
E	A	5	Uses gross and fine motor skills competently.	E	A	1	Has negative orientation to life.
S	A	4	Initiates action to get needs met.	E	F	1	Does not accept warmth and support.
E	P	4	Resists discouragement.	E	F	1	Does not give warmth and support.
				E	F	2	Does not enjoy newness and discovery.
				E	F	2	Is not resiliant following disappointment.
				E	F	2	Does not accept new ideas or new facets of ideas already held.

Category

S - Self
E - Environment

Dimension

P - Productive
A - Active
F - Flexible

Rating

The teacher can capitalize on Joe's strengths by using some of the following strategies: Make use of his competent gross and fine motor skills to introduce new learning through the manipulation of objects. Increase his positive orientation to life by giving him positive feedback whenever possible. Capitalize on his independence and self reliance to help him learn to relate more warmly to others. Have Joe explain or demonstrate a procedure to another person after he has mastered it or ask him to teach the new learning to a less able child.

The use of the Coping Inventory is the first step toward translating coping theory into an action plan for the teacher to help children in the classroom learn to cope more adaptively.

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